

In Stalin's Footsteps

YURI ANDROPOV: RISE OF A DICTATOR

By Victor Herman and Fred E. Dohrs

Editor's Preview: Yuri Andropov's swift emergence as the Soviet Union's new dictator last year was a logical climax to a lifetime's preparation by this brilliant but coldly dedicated totalitarian.

As a young Communist, Andropov was sponsored by one of the architects of Stalin's aggression against Finland. He proved himself a master of duplicity in helping Khrushchev crush the Hungarian Revolution while ambassador there. He was Brezhnev's KGB chief for 15 years, toughening the agency into a feared global spy operation and a pervasive network of domestic repression.

He is not the "good old Yuri" of recent Soviet propaganda portrayals (so gullibly accepted by some in the West), but the shrewdest Soviet politician since Stalin.

Authors Victor Herman, a survivor of the Soviet Gulag, and Fred Dohrs, a Russian area scholar and former intelligence officer, write from strong authority in predicting grimmer times, not brighter ones, in the Andropov era for both the Soviet people at home and the USSR's adversaries abroad.

Many in the West were surprised by Yuri Andropov's rapid seizure of power in the Soviet Union following Leonid Brezhnev's death in November 1982. Speculation had been widespread among Western pundits and analysts during the preceding several months that the successor would be another of the Politburo members such as Konstantin Chernenko, Brezhnev's apparent favorite, or Andrei Gromyko, the longtime Foreign Minister so well known in the West. Andropov, head of the KGB until June 1982, was given little chance, because (according to these Kremlinologists) other Politburo members would not, could not support the idea of turning so much power over to the recent head of the feared KGB.

But it was not primarily Andropov's position as KGB chief that enabled him to gain the top position in the



Andropov, named General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in November 1982, receives congratulations on becoming President of the USSR as well on June 16, 1983.

Politburo. He had already moved into a position of strength in the Politburo following the death of Mikhail Suslov in January 1982. Suslov, senior Party ideologue and intellectual, had been the power behind the throne of both Brezhnev and Khrushchev. Yuri Andropov succeeded him. For Andropov, this was the climax of a pattern throughout his rise—a pattern woven from the support of important and influential friends at each stage of his career, from his own intellectual strength, from years of careful and clever maneuvering.

The scenario for the Politburo "election" had apparently been worked out in advance, and when the successor to Brezhnev was to be named, went something like this: Chernenko, who was supposed to be the heir apparent, and as senior Party Secretary present, stunned the group by nominating Yuri Andropov. After some muttering but no real discussion, Chernenko then asked the standard question, "Has anyone anything to say against this candidate?"

Not only stunned, but also fearful from the evidence that something was going on about which they knew nothing, the other Politburo members kept quiet. No one wished to criticize before the others the man who not only had been chief of the secret police for fifteen years,

im•pri•mis (im-pry-mis) adv. In the first place, from Latin *in primis*, among the first things...

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but also now appeared likely to become their new boss. Nothing was said. Chernenko then observed, "It seems to be unanimous that Yuri Alexanderovich Andropov is our new General Secretary." And it was, though neither an accident, nor should it have been as much of a surprise as it appears to have been.

Andropov's rise to the Party pinnacle had been consistent but not meteoric. He had been supported over the decades by a number of powerful Party officials who, though not well known in the West, had great influence on the nature of the Soviet system and who would be able to operate at the top. One of these was Otto Kuusinen, a member of the Central Committee of the Party and of Finnish background. He recognized Andropov's talent when Andropov was first secretary of the Komsomol (Young Communist League) for the Soviet Karelo-Finnish Republic before World War II. Kuusinen had been picked by Stalin to take over rule of Finland after what the Kremlin had felt would be an easy victory

against Finland in the "Winter War" of 1939-40. Otto Kuusinen apparently did not realize or appreciate the intense patriotism of his fellow Finns who lived in free Finland, but he did recognize the ability of young Yuri Andropov and became his mentor in higher Party circles in Moscow.

Kuusinen was somewhat apart from the rigid Communist orthodoxy applied with unrelenting terror by Stalin. Writing and speaking in favor of domestic reforms and a broader base for Soviet communism, Kuusinen even praised European democratic socialism. For those who want to see Andropov as a reformer and a liberalizing force in the Soviet future, his years of association with Kuusinen provide a slender prop to support such a hope. But while some of Kuusinen's ideas may have rubbed off on the younger, brilliant and ambitious Yuri Andropov, it would be foolish and dangerous to think that such ideas have any important relevance to his thinking today—though some Western analysts appear to want to believe this is possible.

About the Authors

One of the largest crowds ever to attend a lecture at Hillsdale College overflowed the campus auditorium on the evening of April 20, 1983. They had come to hear the personal testament of Victor Herman, an American who survived decades in Soviet slave labor camps and Siberian exile.



Herman's emotionally riveting, sobering, yet inspiring presentation more than fulfilled the hopes of the committee of concerned students and faculty that had invited him to Hillsdale.

Coming Out of the Ice, Victor Herman's autobiography, relates his life story from a Detroit boyhood to fame as a young aviator in 1930s Russia, from nightmare years in the Soviet Gulag to his ultimate return to the U.S. in 1976.

That book became a major film for television. Herman has gone on to write *The Gray People*, a history of the 300 American employees of Ford who were swallowed along with him by the Stalinist tyranny, and *Realities: Might and Paradox in Soviet Russia*, co-authored with Fred E. Dohrs.

Fred Dohrs is an emeritus professor of geography at Wayne State University, specializing in Russia and Eastern Europe. He has made ten extensive trips to that part of the world, served for many years with Air Force intelligence, and has published nine books in addition to the recent collaboration with his close friend and Michigan neighbor Victor Herman.



1956: Model Ambassador in Budapest

After World War II, during which he served as a Party officer working with partisan forces behind German lines, Andropov was moved into the Foreign Ministry and the realm of diplomacy. Success was evident with his appointment as Ambassador to Hungary in 1953. Of critical importance in his rise to Party prominence was his outstanding performance during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. There he showed that he was a master of duplicity, the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove. Andropov's ambassadorial role in Budapest during this crucial period is considered a model for other Soviet ambassadors to emulate.

As a reward for his exceptionally fine work in Hungary, Andropov was made head of the Department of Socialist Countries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. He held this position until becoming head of the KGB in 1967. During the early '60s he worked briefly in Yugoslavia, where he saw that Tito's more liberal brand of Yugoslav Communism offered a viable alternative to what was preached in Moscow.

When Kuusinen died in 1964, Andropov lost an important essential for success at the highest levels of Moscow's political intrigue—a "godfather" or politically powerful sponsor. By this time, however, Andropov had acquired important political status in his own right. He was now perceived as a pragmatic Party member, with considerable personal charm, a broad understanding of Moscow's problems, and a cultivated air of sophistication. A further and perhaps more important indication of his arrival near the top was that he moved into an apartment in a building at 26 Kutasov Prospekt in the heart of Moscow. Other top Party members live in this building, as did the late Leonid Brezhnev. Virtually everything in his apartment, including bathroom and kitchen fixtures and appliances, is

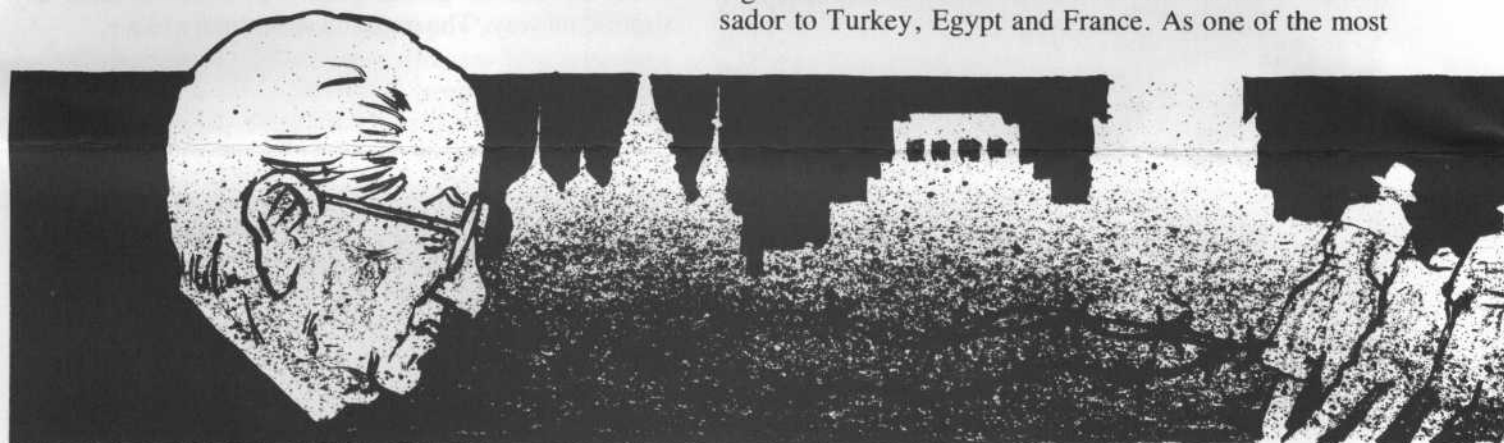
made outside the Soviet Union, mostly in Western countries. That, by current Soviet standards, is the ultimate status symbol.

Yuri Andropov now had proteges of his own. His son, Igor, was a student at the prestigious Institute of International Relations in Moscow, one of the surest routes to the good life of the Party super-elite. After graduating, Igor went to work for a friend and protege of his father—Georgi Arbatov, director of the then recently established U.S.A. Institute. Today Arbatov is regarded in the West as the Soviet Union's top expert on the United States. His views are frequently sought by the American news media, where they are showcased as if

Penkovsky was caught, tried, and executed, but not before very serious damage had been done to the worldwide KGB operation. The overwhelming Israeli defeat of Egypt, armed and advised by the Soviet Union, in the 1967 "Six-Day War" also reflected little credit on either the Soviet military or the KGB. A serious shakeup in the KGB was badly needed.

As Andropov took charge of the agency that year, he once again found others in powerful positions who were able to help him conduct such a shakeup and whose assistance considerably eased his path to greater power.

One of these was Sergei Alexanderovich Vinogradov, a general in the KGB. He had served as Soviet Ambassador to Turkey, Egypt and France. As one of the most



they came from the Delphic Oracle. But however expert and knowledgeable on the United States he may be, Arbatov remains strictly a Politburo mouthpiece, saying whatever Andropov and the Politburo want to be heard and believed in the West.

1967: New Chief for a Shaken KGB

Andropov's career in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs was distinguished and certainly helped his rise to the highest levels of the Party. He was regarded by most as intelligent, wise, and skillful, obviously a substantial cut above his Party peers, and with an impeccable Party record. In 1967, as he turned 53, he was made head of the Committee for State Security, known throughout the world by its acronym—KGB. This promotion and his great success in making the KGB the most famous and feared, most notorious and effective internal control apparatus and global intelligence operation on earth, made Andropov's rise to the absolute pinnacle of Soviet power virtually inevitable.

For the KGB, 1967 was not the best of times. A few years earlier, the Penkovsky case had blown up in the agency's face. Oleg Penkovsky, a colonel in Soviet intelligence, had been passing top-level intelligence information to the British, including names and identities of several hundred Soviet agents. He was a voluminous source of detailed information like the kind that enabled President Kennedy to act so effectively against Khrushchev at the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

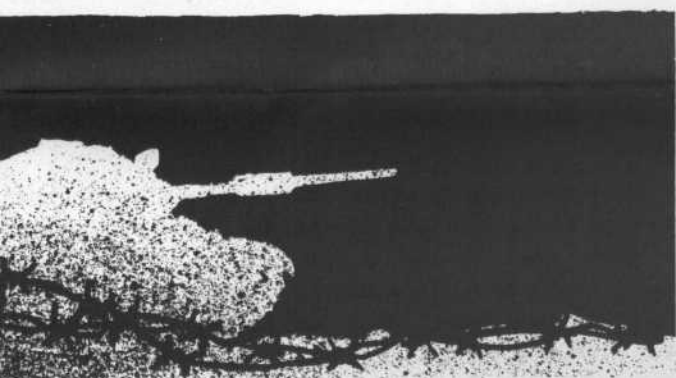
powerful men in Soviet foreign policy, Vinogradov was able to bring Andropov into the highest Kremlin councils.

In addition, there was Alexander Panyushkin, a senior member of the Personnel Department of the Party Central Committee, who was responsible for all higher-level appointments of Soviet citizens working abroad in embassies, trade, and other activities. Friendship with Panyushkin was especially useful for the ambitious Andropov, because Panyushkin had been Soviet Ambassador to both the United States and China. Both of these men were of great influence on Andropov and greatly broadened his knowledge of the diverse world outside the Soviet empire.

Andropov was also able to call on assistance from the man who certainly must rank as the greatest spy of the twentieth century, if not of all time—the Englishman, Harold A.R. "Kim" Philby. By the end of World War II, Philby was head of the Soviet Section of British intelligence and later served as liaison between the British intelligence services and the CIA in Washington. It appears that the initial recruiting of Philby may have been made in 1933 by Vinogradov. The two certainly met in Turkey in 1947, when Vinogradov was Soviet Ambassador in Ankara. In 1963, after a brilliant career as a Soviet agent working in the British intelligence service spanning nearly three decades, Philby sought safety in Moscow.

In the eyes of the KGB, Philby was seen as almost god-like. His authority on espionage matters was never questioned. He had everything—culture, knowledge, intelligence, education, experience, superb manners—in every way the antithesis of many KGB officers of the time. Myths about Philby's exploits circulated throughout the KGB, and imitation of this remarkable spy became inevitable.

Many in the West may have felt that Philby was enjoying well-deserved rest and retirement in Moscow, but the fact is that he became both friend and adviser to Yuri Andropov. Through their relationship, the KGB was transformed from an effective but somewhat crude intelligence agency to a tough and increasingly sophisticated global operation.



Reorganizing any Soviet bureaucracy, even the secret police, for greater efficiency is a monumental task, but Andropov and Philby were able to bring about the essential changes. One of the greatest needs was to improve the quality of KGB officers and agents. The top students from the Institute of International Relations were recruited directly by the KGB. Not only were these young men far better educated, they also had to demonstrate a high level of intellectual capability and a potential for a well-mannered and sophisticated personality. Philby and Andropov knew that really effective KGB operatives would have to be able to mix and be accepted in the highest levels of diplomacy, business, and society throughout the world.

Although membership in the KGB was not often the first career choice of many of these brighter young men, they knew, as does everyone in the Soviet Union, that KGB officers have perks and privileges far above those in other more distinguished and accepted professions. KGB officers receive much higher pay—up to five times that of a qualified engineer, and several times that of an important professor. Beyond that there are the other benefits, usually more important than mere rubles: buying privileges at special food and clothing stores, hospitals and health services of a quality far above those available to ordinary Soviet citizens, cars, as well as special admission to sports, cultural and recreational events and facilities. The KGB was able to make offers to the best and brightest that few were able to refuse.

1977: James Bondski and Brutal Psychiatry

A new domestic propaganda campaign was launched to improve the image of the KGB. Television and motion pictures began showing a whole succession of Soviet secret police agencies in the most favorable light. Lenin's notorious CHEKA, Stalin's brutal GPU and NKVD, and then Andropov's KGB were all given heroic roles, and their agents were portrayed as clean-cut saviors of the Soviet motherland. The exceptional exploits of spy Richard Sorge in Japan became a popular television series, though it was never shown that Sorge was finally caught and executed by the Japanese in 1944. KGB officers and agents invariably appear as smooth, suave and cosmopolitan, outsmarting the enemy all over the world, and every time for the salvation and greater glory of the Soviet Union. (These new Soviet media heroes are something of a James Bond type, but without the fancy gadgetry of the Bond films, and never, never bedding down with beautiful women at the slightest opportunity.)

Although the KGB, in its international operation has shown a high level of sophistication combined with the use of the latest technological advances, its all-seeing and omnipotent domestic investigation and control activities continue to manifest the rough-and-tough characteristics of an earlier KGB. There has, however, been a much greater use of the instruments of contemporary psychology and psychiatry, as well as hallucinogenic and other drugs. The simplistic rule of thumb continues: if you oppose the Soviet system, you must be insane.

By December 1977, at the celebration of sixty years since the Soviet secret police were first formed only weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution, Yuri Andropov could point with considerable pride to the quality and achievements of his new KGB, brought about over a decade of his directorship. In five more years before he took over the top Kremlin job, the trend only continued.

In the 1980s, with Yuri Andropov occupying the former seat of power of Brezhnev, Khrushchev, Stalin, and Lenin, the KGB is unlikely to lose any of its power or responsibilities. Andropov will take care of that if only because of his need to protect his political flank from the threats coming from the Soviet military. These unforgetting and unforgiving marshals and generals continue to resent the presence of a mere policeman in the top power position in the Soviet Union. Especially, a secret policeman who represents the same organization that destroyed nearly eighty percent of the senior officers of the Red Army during Stalin's purges of the late 1930s.

Although the Politburo "election" of Andropov to be party chief immediately after Brezhnev's funeral appeared to be a well-greased political maneuver, there are some cracks in Yuri Andropov's Kremlin wall. Konstantin Chernenko, who was Brezhnev's choice for

the succession, cannot yet be counted out of the struggle for the top Party position. There is a strong pro-Chernenko faction at high Party levels. It should be remembered that some in the West expected that Kosygin might unseat Brezhnev in the years right after Khrushchev's ouster. Khrushchev spent several years consolidating his power to achieve supremacy, though Malenkov had taken over right after Stalin's death. And Stalin had to defeat Trotsky before he was firmly in power. Uneasy lies the head that wears a Soviet crown.

1982: Courting the Generals

Much of Andropov's unease comes over concern for the great power held by the Soviet military establishment. Khrushchev had needed the strong support of war hero Marshal Georgi Zhukov to overcome Party and other resistance to his ambitions. Andropov's fifteen years as KGB head could not but have made him acutely aware of the chronic hostility the military has for the secret police.

Accordingly, shortly after the Politburo election, Andropov made a speech to the senior military officers. It must have sounded almost too good to be true to the assembled marshals, generals, and admirals.

In effect, Andropov told them precisely what they wanted to hear: We will see that you get the best weapons and other armaments. The troops, especially the field grade and senior officers, will receive even higher pay. The Soviet budget can and will sustain all that is necessary to guarantee that the Soviet military establishment will be superior to any in the world. Furthermore, there is a long-range cruise missile now under test that will be superior to anything the Americans have.

Such a speech, whether or not Andropov was bluffing or lying, was bound to bring his audience to their feet, cheering and slapping each other on the back, congratulating themselves on their new leader.

But Andropov apparently was not bluffing about the new cruise missile. It should be realized that some of the weapons research for the Soviet military is carried out at KGB installations such as the closed city of Dubna, a short distance north of Moscow. Dubna is an unusual place—a heavily guarded city which few of the top-level research physicists and other scientists working there are ever allowed to leave. All work at the center is carefully overseen by KGB experts working side by side with their civilian counterparts. It does seem more than a little unusual, however, that senior military commanders could be unaware of the development of an important new weapon. But stranger things than that continue to take place in the secretive Soviet system.

A week after the speech to the military leaders, Andropov publicly and openly threatened Japan with nuclear incineration should Japan undertake any major rearmament program, especially building a new navy to

counter growing Soviet naval power in the western Pacific. This hardly suggests any perception of Andropov as a man of peace, though at the same time he has publicly and covertly supported, even courted the nuclear freeze and peace movements in Western Europe and the United States. Andropov is very clever in dangling carrots of dubious disarmament proposals before gullible and wishful-thinking Westerners.

In his first speech to the Soviet peoples, Andropov was far from conciliatory. Promising almost nothing, he warned that improvement in Soviet life can only come with more and more hard work from everyone. He specifically threatened the idlers and slackers, those indifferent to their work responsibilities to the State, railing against the corruption and chicanery which are the commonplace of everyday life in the Soviet Union. Since that speech, there has been some crackdown on those he accused, but it seems unlikely to alter very much the present system in which nearly everyone must constantly struggle to make ends meet by whatever means possible.

Andropov may be deliberately making things tougher to foment reaction and thus justify a widespread purge of those whom he sees as threats to Soviet internal stability. Such an action would not be resisted by the military. As time passes, there are fewer and fewer alive who remember the bad old days of Stalin. Andropov may feel that stronger measures are required. These threats do not come as any great surprise to the long-suffering Soviet peoples. In fact, knowing Andropov's record as KGB chief, they tend to expect the worst, and may indeed get just that.

Uncle Joe and Good Old Yuri

Some are still speculating whether there is anyone able to pull the strings of influence over Yuri Andropov. Who qualifies as the *eminence grise* behind the throne of the Kremlin? In contrast to his most immediate predecessors, who owed their position and authority largely to Mikhail Suslov, Andropov appears to be very much his own man. To a great extent this is because he actually replaced Suslov as top intellect and ideologue shortly after the latter's death early in 1982. Without question, Andropov is the toughest, most clever and shrewd Soviet politician since Stalin, and possibly of all Soviet leaders. He is not likely to be easily fooled, and only a fool would fool with him. There can be no "troika" with Andropov at the top. His will be a one-man dictatorship.

All of this is in noticeable contrast to the massive disinformation campaign that began worldwide immediately after the Politburo election. How the propaganda drums beat, describing Yuri Andropov as one who listened to and liked Western music (it appears that during his years in Budapest he took a strong liking to gypsy music), was widely travelled, spoke fairly good English with an American accent, was intelligent,

sophisticated, well educated and discerning—probably preferred scotch to vodka—in fact, a pretty good guy who undoubtedly thinks much more like a Westerner and was more understanding than any of his predecessors. The kind of person the West could easily work with.

Forgotten was the fact that under his direction, the Gulag Archipelago system of slave labor camps operated under KGB jurisdiction was rebuilt, not to the level of Stalin's time, but with something approaching five million inmates at present. Large numbers of these are political prisoners whose only crime has been to disagree with the police state system and its total lack of freedom throughout the country.

The American media, press and network news, all repeated over and over the nonsense about the "good guy" nature of Yuri Andropov, to the point where many Americans may well believe that under Andropov—good old Yuri—relations with the Soviet Union are bound to improve dramatically. Utter nonsense!

At this time, one can take the position that nothing will change under Andropov, or that everything will change, or hold any position in between. These viewpoints can be argued with vigor and evidence, but no one can really know. Certainly, relaxation within the Soviet Union seems unlikely, and nothing has happened since last November suggesting that the strong Soviet thrust toward its global goals will be reduced in any significant way. The opposite seems more likely.



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